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FM AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4413  
INFO ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
AMEMBASSY MANILA  
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
NSC WASHDC  
HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000015

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NOFORN

STATE FOR EAP/MTS/MGCOPPOLA, INR/EAP/KKERR  
SINGAPORE FOR KSEABAUGH

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [BX](#)

SUBJECT: BRUNEI: RELUCTANT TO LEAD IMT, AND CRITICAL OF  
MALAYSIAN POLITICS

Classified By: John McIntyre, Deputy Chief of Mission.  
Reasons 1.4(b and d).

#### Brunei Resists Pressure to Lead the IMT

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[11](#). (SBU) Poloff on 15 January met with Haji Mulok Haji Jamat, the Deputy Director for East Asia and the Pacific Affairs in the Political I section of the Brunei Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT). Mulok told Poloff that Brunei plans to only supply monitors to the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao, while the Malaysian contingent will remain the leader of the IMT and lead facilitator of the Philippines Government (GRP)/ Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace talks. Mulok said the GRP has not asked Brunei to lead the IMT and only the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia are under consideration. Mulok said the GRP, however, has asked Brunei to provide additional monitors beyond its current ten but the Bruneian Government has yet to agree to an actual number. The GRP has also requested that Brunei extend its term until this February but this is also still under consideration by the Bruneian Government, according to Mulok.

[12](#). (SBU) Mulok attributed the failure of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain to the GRP. He said he personally believed that the GRP should have consulted the Philippine Supreme Court beforehand and that the MILF dispute probably will not be resolved under the current Arroyo administration. He also believed the appointment of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis to head of the peace panel was proof that the GRP was not taking negotiations seriously because Seguis is not cabinet-ranked.

[13](#). (SBU) Poloff and Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) on 20 January received conflicting information on Brunei's IMT participation from a meeting at the Philippine Embassy in Brunei. The Defense and Armed Forces Attach at the Philippine Embassy, Col. Emmanuel Cacdac, said Brunei will lead the IMT if Brunei receives approval from the Malaysian Government and the MILF. Cacdac said the GRP is currently looking at the logistics involved in appointing Brunei as leader of the IMT. He said there are no current moves to appoint Malaysia or Indonesia as leader of the IMT.

#### Mutual Benefits from Brunei's IMT Role

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[14](#). (SBU) Despite Brunei's reluctance to take lead in the IMT, the Philippine Embassy in Brunei expects the Bruneian government's role to expand beyond peace monitoring and into development aid in Mindanao. At the same meeting with the

Philippines Embassy in Brunei on 20 January, the Minister, Celeste Balatbat, said Brunei must also contribute to community development projects in Mindanao under the GRP's new paradigm for the peace process. The Government of Brunei is currently partnered with the GRP to develop an Islamic Civic Center in the Cotabato province. The Government of Brunei has already contributed by building a mosque and sports facility, donating Qurans and food, and providing scholarships to Madrasah teachers for studies at the University of Brunei Darussaleem.

15. (SBU) Balatbat also said Brunei receives mutual benefits from its participation in the IMT. She said the Bruneian peace monitors return to Brunei with more confidence and are promoted to higher positions. Col. Aminuddin Hihsan-the leader of the first batch of Bruneian monitors in 2004-was promoted to Commander of the Royal Brunei Land Forces. Balatbat said it is highly competitive in the Royal Brunei Armed Forces to become a peace monitor on the Bruneian contingent. The Royal Brunei Armed Forces in September 2008 deployed its fifth batch of ten monitors in Cotabato City for a ten month tour under the leadership of Lt. Col. Tajuddin, according to Balatbat. Haji Mulok Haji Jamat said during our meeting on 15 January that Brunei benefits from the MILF peace negotiations because fighting has been problematic for Bruneian businessmen and the BIMP-EAGA. He said Bruneian businessmen are currently having problems promoting their Halal products among the Muslim population in Davao, Philippines.

#### Brunei Officials Critical of Malaysia's Political Climate

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16. (SBU) Mulok during our meeting on 15 January also discussed the Bruneian government's views on Malaysian politics. Mulok said the Government of Brunei did not believe Pakatan Rakyat (PR), Malaysia's opposition coalition, would win in the upcoming Sarawak elections because the PR still lacks a sufficient amount of voter support. Mulok said the Government of Brunei thought Barisan Nasional (BN), Malaysia's ruling coalition, would only win by a small margin. Despite the Sabahans' disappointment with Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, Mulok said the PR still does not offer Sabahans' any opportunities to participate in the government.

17. (SBU) On Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak, Mulok said he personally believed that Najib will not last long as Prime Minister if he assumes the position in March. Mulok believed Najib lacks charisma, has a domineering wife, and is too controversial, particularly because of his speculated association with the murder of Mongolian translator, Altantuya Shaariibuu. He said the Bruneian Government views Najib as corrupt and a sitting duck who always goes for the winning team. On Malaysian opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim, Mulok said the Bruneian Government still believes Anwar is a potential Malay leader but is too ambitious. Since joining the PR, Mulok said Anwar has changed and forgotten his initial reason for joining politics which was the struggle for Muslim and Malay issues. Mulok said the Bruneian Government respected Anwar when he was Deputy Prime Minister under Mahathir Mohamad but now believes Anwar is overconfident and greedy.

Comment

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18. (C//NF) The Borneo Bulletin reported that His Majesty the Sultan will make a three-day visit to the Philippines from 29 January to 31 January to commemorate the 25th anniversary of diplomatic ties. While we expect His Majesty to agree to strengthen cooperation with the Philippines, he probably will not agree to lead the IMT, especially given the resistance we have seen throughout our meetings with MOFAT. The Philippine Ambassador to Brunei, however, has made it her personal mission to persuade Brunei to be the lead facilitator of the IMT before she leaves her post in Brunei.

19. (C//NF) The conflicting statements between the Philippines Embassy and Haji Mulok Haji Jamat probably reflect the Bruneian Government's continuing reluctance to take lead in any multilateral negotiations. The Bruneian Government seems content with its current role in the IMT, and likely will continue to deflect offers to be the lead facilitator. MOFAT officials have emphasized in our meetings that Brunei does not intervene in the internal politics of other countries because it cannot afford to develop enemies with its small army. Mulok was surprisingly candid with his thoughts on the Malaysian political climate; his candor was unusual for meetings between Embassy Bandar and Bruneian government officials.

TODD